Luke Swetland's Captivity

MERRIFIELD

THE STORY

of the Captivity and Rescue from the Indians of

LUKE SWETLAND

An early settler of the Wyoming Valley and a soldier of the American Revolution

By EDWARD MERRIFIELD

SCRANTON, PA., 1915

I have so often heard from my mother, Almira (Swetland) Merrifield, and my Aunt, Harriet (Swetland) Whiston, the story of their Granddaddy, Luke Swetland, with whom they spent their childhood days, that I feel competent to make a permanent record of it, and to rewrite his own narrative of his captivity. I gratefully acknowledge the aid of Mrs. Kate Pettibone Dickson in the publication of this book and dedicate it to the memory of her mother, Caroline M. (Swetland) Pettibone, a great granddaughter of Luke Swetland.

E. MERRIFIELD.

January, 1915.

CHAPTER I.

Biographical Sketch.

Luke Swetland was one of the early settlers of Wyoming Valley, coming with the Connecticut settlers in 1769, so far as I am able to ascertain; possibly it may have been in 1763. The hardships and privations of those early settlers has many times been written in prose and verse collectively; but records of the trials and troubles of individuals are few. The awful blow that fell upon the Slocum family, when little Frances was captured by the Indians, and but a short time after, Jonathan Slocum, her father, was murdered by them, has been recalled and preserved in story in a book written and published by his descendant, Mrs. Martha Bennett Phelps, and has a deserved place in history. No one can read of that sad event, and of the wonderful incidents connected with the discovery of the captive without a due appreciation of the troubles incident to the early days of fair Wyoming, and a sincere respect for kindred that has so perpetuated the memory of her ancestors.

There is not so much of pathos connected with the story of Luke Swetland, but there is enough; and the romantic incidents concerning his captivity and escape will at least make it an interesting episode of those troublesome days and entitle it to a place among the archives of Wyoming's history.

Luke Swetland was born on the 16th day of June, 1729, O. S., in the town of Lebanon, Windham County, Connecticut. He was a son of John Swetland, who was born in Salem, Massachusetts, July 1, 1681; and a grandson of William Swetland, who resided in Salem in 1676, and came from Buckinghamshire, England. Luke was married to Hannah Tiffany in Warren Township, Litchfield County, Connecticut, on the first of April, 1762.

They had heard of the plains of Wyoming, and in common, with neighbors and acquaintances, concluded to leave the rugged hills of Connecticut and seek a new home on the banks of the Susquehanna. In fact at that time, it was believed that the Wyoming Valley was within the jurisdiction of their home State. Little did they dream of the hardships, trials

and privations which their advent there brought upon them. Not only were they in the midst of querulous and exacting Indians, but the Pennsylvanians disputed the jurisdiction of Connecticut, which led to a long and bitter contest, known as the Pennamite War.

The war of the Revolution came on, and Luke Swetland at the age of forty-six joined the patriot army by enlisting in Captain Robert Durkee's company. They were mustered into service in September, 1776, and were sent into the State of New Jersey, where General Washington was in immediate command. He saw the great commander frequently during the winter of 1777. Often after, and during his latter years, he spoke of him with the greatest reverence and respect. The company was in the battle of Millstone and Boundbrook, and was at Valley Forge and Brandywine. Early in 1778 there came rumors of a contemplated raid on Wyoming Valley by a force of Indians and Tories, under the British Commander Col. John Butler. This determined the authorities to release the Wyoming volunteers and allow them to return for the protection of their homes and families.

Luke Swetland's discharge is dated January 8th, 1778. He was one of forty men that erected Forty Fort, and from the circumstance of the number engaged, it derived its name. Its location, about two miles above Kingston, has been commemorated by a substantial marker, placed there by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Here they purposed to assemble for protection in case of invasion, and here they were with their families and others, on the third of July, 1778. Unfortunately they concluded to march out, go up the valley, and meet the invaders. Before doing so they determined by lot four men to remain in the fort to protect the women and children. Luke Swetland was one of those selected, hence, remained at the fort at the time of the battle. The invading army did not remain after the massacre, but returned up the river, from whence they came. Straggling bands of Indians continued to prowl about, occasionally capturing a prisoner, and otherwise committing depredations. Frances Slocum was carried away in November, and her father was killed shortly after.

CHAPTER II.

How He Was Captured.

On the 25th of August, 1778, Luke Swetland and a neighbor, Joseph Blanchard, started down the Susquehanna in a canoe, intent on going to a grist mill, situate at the mouth of Fishing Creek, near Nanticoke.. A party of six Seneca Indians discovered them, and, stealthily creeping along the shore, pounced upon them just as they made their landing and made them prisoners. They hurried them off up the river, stopping only when night came, until they reached the neighborhood of Seneca Lake, in the State of New York, where there were Indian settlements. Before they came to their destination, they separated the prisoners, and Swetland never knew what became of Blanchard. He thought they took him away and killed him. Thus, left alone, he was finally consigned to an old Indian who lived at Appletown, near the head of the Lake, in the present town of Romulus, Seneca County, New York.

Not returning home as was expected, his family waited many weary days in anxious

suspense; finally concluding that he had been captured and killed by the savages, as such occurrences were frequent at that time. The wife and mother, driven almost to desperation, knew not what to do. Her oldest son Belding, was in his sixteenth year, Daniel and Joseph, about fourteen and eleven respectively, and Artemas, the youngest, but little past nine. They could be of some assistance, but comparatively little in a country where hostile Indians were liable to pounce upon them, so she undertook the task of getting back to her old home in Connecticut; and only think what an undertaking it was. There was no public conveyance, and the major part of the way over an old Indian trail, through an almost unbroken wilderness. The hardships and privations can well be imagined. In due time, however, she reached the haven of safety, and told her story to sympathizing relatives and friends. Nine years had passed since the old threshold had been left; then with high hopes of establishing a home in the beautiful vale of Wyoming; now a return with a tale of woe, that seldom betides the weary traveler.

CHAPTER III.

His Appearance at His Old Home in Connecticut.

Over fourteen months had passed, with no tidings of the fate of Luke Swetland, the husband and father; when one bright October morning in 1779, he stood at the door of the little home of his family in Kent, Litchfield County, Connecticut. To them it at first seemed like an apparition. But there he truly was, in flesh and blood. Hannah Swetland took her beloved husband in fond embrace and the children gathered around to give tearful greeting. The sorrows of the past were forgotten, and all was thanksgiving and rejoicing. There sometimes comes compensations for dire calamities, and here was one; who shall say that it was not the work of Divine Providence? He was a religious man, and had often knelt in prayer, for this very hour to come; and here came the full fruition of his hopes. Not alone was it a source of happiness to his family; old neighbors and friends came from far and near, with their congratulations and glad welcome.

Then came the long, long story of his captivity; the long detention and final escape, which will be told further on in these pages in his own words. After his escape, he came with General Sullivan's army to Wyoming, where, by the generosity of old acquaintances, he was furnished with a horse and saddle. So, alone he started on the tedious journey through the wilderness, for the old home in Kent, Litchfield County, Connecticut, where he found his family as hereinbefore detailed. Just how long he remained there, I am unable to ascertain. I find that his oldest son Belding was married to Sally Gay at Sharon, Litchfield Connecticut, in 1787, and that his oldest son William was born there in 1789. It was after this date that Luke, and his son Belding, returned to Pennsylvania and settled on the Susquehanna River, near Mehoopany, now Wyoming County. He probably did not return to the Wyoming Valley at once on account of the contest that was being waged between the Pennamites and the Connecticut claimants, although the decree of Trenton, which was made in 1782, deciding the matter in favor of Pennsylvania; a fierce controversy

was kept up between the rival claimants until near 1800. At all events, Luke Swetland, with his son Belding, returned to Wyoming Valley in 1800 and settled on what has since been known as the Swetland homestead, the third farm below the Wyoming Monument. Luke was then seventy-one years old, still hale and strong, well able to perform the labors incidental to clearing the land and farming. He established a nursery of fruit trees and was successful in raising all the ordinary farm products for which the land was so well adapted. He contributed to the erection of the Forty Fort meeting house, and on the first of July, 1803, his name is first on the list of those who signed the covenant for the formal organization of the First Presbyterian Church of Wilkes-Barre. He in fact was one of the enterprising and prominent citizens of old Luzerne.

CHAPTER IV.

How and Where He Was Captured.

While in Connecticut he wrote an account of his captivity, and experience, which was published in pamphlet form at Hartford, Connecticut. During his later years he wrote another account of his captivity; the manuscript was in the possession of Mrs. Caroline M. Pettibone, daughter of William Swetland. In 1875 both narratives were published by A. Osborn, Esq., a kinsman on his mother's side of Luke Swetland, and it is this publication that I now have. The two publications do not differ as to facts, but each one contains many occurrences that are not embodied in the other. I now propose to re-write and produce in one continuous story his statements, adhering as closely as possible to the text, and in fact, to the language used by him. The front leaf of the original publication, which described his capture, the first day and night, and second day, was torn out and cannot be given in his own words. The Indians had undoubtedly noticed them as they were boating down the

river, moved slyly along the bank, so as to be near when they pointed for a landing. As soon as they stepped on shore, the savages well armed, surrounded them. Why they didn't kill them at once is accounted for on the supposition that they desired to torment their victims in every possible way, incident to their savage natures.

They immediately started up the river, keeping away from the clearings, until they passed the upper end of the valley. His feelings at the time are described in the latter part of his narrative. On account of the circuitous route taken, they did not make much progress the first day. On the route they were constantly subjected to horrid threats and inhuman treatment. At night they were literally bound, tied down and left with scarcely anything to eat. The next day was but a repetition of the first. We now come to the second night, and from which time we have his written statement as follows:

CHAPTER V.

Luke Swetland's Narrative.

When we were pinioned and secured as we had been the night before, we laid down to rest. We arose early the next morning and went on; my master still continuing his cruelty. When we were set down to rest, he would often call to me and say, "Come in, my dog," meaning, come here, my dog; and when I went to him he would cock his fire lock, put it to my breast and grin; then with an air of great fury put his finger to the trigger. At first I thought these moments were my last, but I said and did nothing. Seeing that I paid no regard to these motions, he would open the pan, throw out the priming, and after priming anew, would put the gun to my forehead, with the same furious motions as before. And so he went on all the day, doing everything he could invent to torment me. When he made these daily and hourly signs of firing me through, sometimes with his gun at my head, and sometimes with it at my breast, I often said to myself: "You can't kill me without a commission from the

God in whose hands my life is; and if this is the way he has appointed for me to die, it was my duty to submit to His will." And blessed be God that I had any degree of submission, as I sometimes thought I really had. The thought of my poor family, and what would be their fate was a constant source of sorrow.

In the evening we came to Mehoopany, where there was an encampment of Tories. I was well acquainted with some of them. They said they were glad we were taken, but sorry we were not killed; however, they gave us victuals. This night we were tied to a part of their hut. Two of them stood sentry over us, and both men and women of their party danced around us nearly all night. Next morning some of the Tories who had been my old neighbors appeared friendly and gave me a razor and soap to shave myself with. They also gave me more food. They told the Indians that I was an honest man. After this the Indian captain took me to himself and was very tender to me. Finding that I was very lame he opened the stone bruises on my feet and showed me all the favor he could. We

went on slowly up the river that day, finding several Tory families, and from whom we had good usage. The next day we came to Teoga, where there was another camp of Tories, who were former neighbors, and some Indians. The Tories spoke roughly to me, but gave us buttermilk to drink. When we started away from them, my Indian captain went along in advance of me, I being very lame had to go slowly. All of a sudden I felt a blow on my head, which sidled me out of my path. When I had recovered somewhat, he struck on the other side of my head, which nearly brought me to the ground. On looking around I found that it was an Indian who had followed on from the Tory camp. I did my best to get out of his way, but he continued following along with kicks and blows, until at last he went back to the camp. Then, my master stopped and waited until I came up, when he bade me go before him. So we went on, and quite late in the evening came to Shemongo. This was the evening of the 29th of August. It being very dark, my master gave the prisoner whoop, which rallied the whole town. Numbers of them met us, yelling, screaming,

jumping and running. They were so wild and fierce that I thought myself and fellow prisoner would certainly be slain. Now death was no terror to me, yet I think I did, in some measure, seek refuge in God. Sometimes it troubled me to think of being killed and dying in a heathen land. One time in particular it seemed to me that I was as willing to die now, and on this place, as I ever should be. It was my earnest desire to know my duty in all respects, and to be rightly disposed to all beings.

The Indian captain then took hold of my hand and ran some distance to a house so that they could not hurt me, but they took Blanchard and abused him badly. Some time after he came where I was, having been wounded in the head and face, and very bloody. The captain appeared to pity him and brought water to wash off the blood. Here we lay that night, not bound at all. Next day my companion Blanchard took leave of me, saying, "I shall never see you again; pray for me, it is all we can do for each other." So I went on, two Indians conducting me. We had not gone far when we came to a party of Indians. One, exceedingly fierce and warlike in appearance,

came up, and with great fury began to strip off my clothes, even my shirt, and I went on naked about twenty rods. Another Indian came up briskly saying, "Yankee! Yankee"! Having a drawn sword in his hand, he raised it up as though he was going to cut me in two, but he struck with it flat on my back. We went a little farther on and came to a town of Indians. They came out and placed themselves in two ranks, one each side of the path, and as near as I can guess, about fifteen on a side; every one having a stick in his hand. My Indian conductor started on between the two ranks, I following slowly after. They all made an attempt at striking me, but did not hurt much.

We went on and came to French Catharine's, a squaw so-called. This place was Catharine's town, and the residence of the famous Catharine Montour. (She was the same old squaw of whom he writes so kindly in a later paragraph.) She spoke good English and told what they were going to do with me. Next day she sent two Indians to carry me on horseback toward Appletown, to a place named Candawhaes. There the two Indians

left me at a house called the Long House, where I stayed three days. About the first thing I did was to seek a convenient place of retirement, where I should be alone and spend much of the time by the side of the lake, underneath a high cliff of rocks. Finally there came an old Indian who took me home with him to Appletown, where I was given to an old squaw as a grandson. She made a great lamentation over me, showing many signs of respect. In her family were three little squaws, who did the same.

A few days after this, some Indian scouts came into the town, bringing two captives whom they had taken on the Susquehanna River. I went to speak with them, but they would not let them talk much. The next morning the captain of the scouts came to me and asked if I knew his prisoners. I answered him no. He told me how I was disposed of, and how they called their relations in their way; told me, "This old squaw is your grandmother," and pointing to the biggest of the little ones, said, "This is your sister, and these two little ones your cousins." And so he went on through the town, telling me who were my

relations, saying I would soon be an Indian myself; then would know all about it. I was glad of this opportunity to talk in my own language, as I had heard few English words spoken for many days; so I became settled in Appletown.

CHAPTER VI.

How Treated When Taken Sick.

I went visiting often, sometimes attended their gatherings to learn their sports. Many of them were pleasing, and they tried to learn me. I had frequent opportunities to visit Tories of my acquaintance, who were civil and kind to me. Here were plenty of peaches of the best kind. About the 10th of September, I was taken sick with a fever and ague, which confined me some time. On this occasion the people of the town were very attentive, giving me butter and some milk, and buttermilk. My Indian sister went daily more than half a mile to get spring water; the other water was but a few rods off. (It is well to state here that this particular spring had a great reputation for its medicinal and healing qualities.) I thought these favors were worthy of my grateful notice. During the time of my sickness, French Catharine came to see me. She spoke in English, and said, "How do you do, my child." I could not forbear weeping, it was so agreeable to hear English words again. She

wept and so did the old grandmother and sister. French Catharine told them to be kind to me. She went to Niagara, and on her return gave me sweet flag root to steep in water for drinking, and it helped me. From that I had liberty to do as I had a mind to.

When I first came to Appletown I spent much of my time in the woods. I had no books of any kind. I endeavored to spend the first Wednesday of each month, when my health and the weather would permit, all alone in fasting, prayer and meditation. During November, and on one of my visits to Tory acquaintances, I begged a quart of wheat from them, which I sowed in my grain field, thinking to raise wheat should I be obliged to continue with them many years.

I often saw prisoners brought along; some from Minnisink on the Delaware River, some from Cherry Valley, and some from the West Branch; also Widow Lister, with two of her children, and old Mr. Hagaman, from Wyoming. I spoke with them both, but it displeased the Indians. They stayed in the town over night, and went off early in the morning.

Cold weather began to come on. I was now entirely in Indian dress, having worn out the trousers which I had on when taken. Not being accustomed to wear breech clouts, I dreaded the cold on my naked thighs, and the house being open and cold, I suffered greatly therefrom. I had pulled and dried a lot of good English grass, with which I made my bed. About the beginning of winter, one Michael Sturmers gave me a Bible, which was a great comfort to me. I felt very thankful, as I thought then as now, that it was the most blessed book in the world. I took great satisfaction reading the Psalms of David. When the cold and stormy winter days came on, and I in Indian costume, a cold fashioned dress to me, I feared I should have no convenient place to retire, but on looking about found a cave in the side of a hill, where I could be hid from mortal eyes and be protected from the inclemency of the season. Thither I went twice a day while at home, and spent the greater part of the Sabbaths, meditating and reading. Thus I lived, but not without a great deal of suffering. However, I got through the winter better than I had expected. The next summer

Partial Terry sent me a book called "Mr. Edwards' Life."

* * * *

During the spring, our corn being nearly all gone, we began to dig ground nuts and gather bass wood buds. Later we made some sugar. Wood betony sprang up early, which I ate with sugar. This, with some other weeds and nuts, was our main support until about July, when we had some dead horse, which I thought was the best meat in the world.

CHAPTER VII.

Indians Capture a Wyoming Prisoner.

Some time in April we heard that the Yankees had taken an Indian town called Onodauger, so we all set off and went towards Niagara, about twenty miles to the town of Canadasager, where we stayed about six days in a sugar house as near as I can remember. One morning I heard the prisoner war whoop and went to see who and what they had brought in. It was a Continental soldier, named Butler, taken near Wyoming, and Nathan Bullock, who was on his way to join General Sullivan's army, that was being organized to destroy the Indians. This gave me a new hope of deliverance. He told me that the Indians took him out about twenty rods into the thickest briar bushes they could find; stripped him naked, then set a large number of young Indians to whip him through the bushes, back to the house. He was somewhat bloody when I saw him. He lived with me several days. Finally one of them came and conducted him to his allotted Indian father

and mother, beyond Queaga Lake (supposed to be Cayuga). He was a very agreeable young man. I showed him that wood betony was good to eat, and would support and sustain life; also bass wood leaves, ground nuts and many other weeds and roots, which had been the greatest part of my sustenance for some time.

CHAPTER VIII.

He Is Left Alone and Makes an Attempt to Run Away.

During the month of June my black relatives all went back to Appletown to hoe their corn, leaving me to live alone. They left a cow which gave nearly a pint of milk a day. Sometimes Indians would steal it, milking the cow themselves, and as I depended on the milk and had not prepared any ground nuts or weeds, it occasioned me to go to bed supperless. But that made me watchful. This cow having been so long farrow, and gave so little milk, that I went to milking another cow which was entirely dry. In a few days she gave a gill of milk a day. I think I lived here near an Indian town called Cashaem, for ten days entirely alone. One night someone came into the house while I was asleep. I heard nothing until I was aroused by this person squeezing my hand and calling to me. It being dark, I could not see who or what color the intruder was. The words were "Cauche guando." I said, "Este quato." The English of the former is

"come out," and the latter "go away." After the same words, or those of similar purport were banded back and forth, the creature went away, and I never knew who it was, whether black or white, male or female. Several days after I took a horse, designing to run away, and rode up the lake, about eleven miles south of the Canadayager, to a creek, where some Indians and squaws lived. I tied the horse went to fishing, as I had done before. One squaw came to me and said, that if I would hoe so much corn for her she would give me so much venison, which I gladly complied with, as I had nothing to support myself on the intended journey, except fish. I went to work, did as I agreed, and was paid according to the bargain; then said, if I would do so much more, I should have more venison. This I did also, and she gave me the meat. Now I thought I could get along very well with the venison and a fish or two that I had caught. It was now nearly night, so I mounted the horse and set out on my journey. Considering the difficulties attending my safe escape, and being a stranger to some parts of the road, together with the number of Indian towns on the way and my

small degree of strength of body, I made quite a distance along the creek. On account of the numerous streams and marshy grounds, I could ride but little of the way, hence, became so discouraged that I concluded to return back. When I came to the house in which I had lived alone I learned that my Indian uncle, who owned the cows before spoken of, had driven them away, leaving word for me to come over the lake to Appletown. But about this time, which was the latter end of June, I became acquainted with an Indian who spoke good English. He was going over to the Salt Spring to make salt, and gave me an opportunity to go along. I had a brass kettle which held about a pailful. I filled it with the spring water and boiled it down, making, as near as I could judge, about one quart. I kept on until I had about half a bushel of as good salt as I ever saw.

When we had finished making salt I made another attempt to run away, but, being feeble, on account of not having proper food, found myself unable to do so. I was so weak that I found it very hard to travel, even four miles a day. While on the journey I met an old Indian,

who said he was my grandfather. He stole a bull on the way at Candayager, killed it, and in six days, six of us, and two of the six small persons, ate it all. Then he killed a horse, and having more help, we soon devoured that. We caught some eels, killed a few hawks, shite pokes and musk rats, and I thought we lived exceedingly well. It was now towards the last of July and green corn began to be fit to roast.

CHAPTER IX.

Makes An Effort to Get Back to Wyoming.

About this time I thought I would make one more effort to get back to Wyoming. I agreed with my so-called Indian grandfather to take me about ten miles in a canoe, partly towards Appletown. I took my salt kettle and other things, and set out. He brought me the ten miles, and I started off on foot. Along the shore I found a horse's head that had been killed the same day. I took the meat off, carried it with me, and continued my journey. Part of the salt I left at an abandoned Indian house and went on with the rest of my things, traveling several miles. Finding myself growing very tired and weak, I caught a horse and rode a few miles, but fearing I might meet Indians, left the horse and went on foot again. But my strength continued to fail, so I changed my mind and went home to my Indian grandmother at Appletown. Having been gone about six weeks, she received me with great joy, and gave me, as it was called, "Benjamin's

mess." So did many of the neighbors. They brought me victuals to express their joy. I told them about leaving salt at the house on Queaga Lake, and they furnished a horse for me to go and get it. This was about eight miles from Appletown, and when I returned they were greatly pleased with the salt.

CHAPTER X.

The Indians Hear That the Yankees Are Coming.

Soon after this I perceived a great stir among the Indians and asked what was the matter. They told me the Yankees were coming, that there were a great many of them, and they had got as far as Teoga. I partly rejoiced, and yet feared all the while; intending to get to them if possible. I made it my business to try and find out their motion and strength, and found they were within about seventy miles. The Indians gathered all the force they could to withstand our army. They and the Tories were in constant tumult, passing and repassing the distance between me and them, so I thought it was unsafe to go. They were defeated and driven back where I was. I waited with impatience and hoped the soldiers would soon drive through the country; and I studied in what way or how I could safely get to them, but all my plans failed. It was now the evening of August 21st, 1779. In Indian expression yo ho" five times over. They said,

"Great deal bad news." They said to me, shaking their fingers, "Great deal Yankees come! We all go yawgaw" (meaning Niagara). On Thursday, September 2nd, they brought me a horse, and all being ready, we set out for Niagara, traveling fifteen miles, and lodged in the woods. I estimate there were about three hundred and sixty Indians, and two hundred and twelve Tories and British soldiers encamped there that night. For some time I thought to take that opportunity to make my escape, believing the last time had come that I might reasonably expect to have. The Tories were in the rear, as we had passed by them, and the Indians were scattered all around; so it appeared very dangerous to get away undiscovered. When I thought over the matter seriously, it struck me as it were with a chill. I had put the things which I proposed to carry along separate from the Indians, and laid down with the view of sleeping, but was so disturbed and excited that sleep was all gone. I lay musing on what I designed to do; with a prayer to Almighty God for His direction and preservation. However, after a while, I fell asleep and slept until

awakened by a squaw who brought me some food. I rose up and ate it, then waited till I thought they were all asleep, which was about midnight. I carefully moved to my pack, which was some distance from where I lay, took it up and moved for the horses, as they were stamping and feeding. I crawled from one to another until I had passed all their guards and thought to myself that I had well nigh escaped. I then went as fast as I could until I had got about three miles nearly east, then turned southerly, which was my course to the Continental army, and traveled all night. Much of the way was through weeds and brush as high as my head, which made my progress very slow. Toward the break of day I felt very weary and laid down to sleep till sunrise; then got up and went on. About three o'clock in the afternoon I had got back nearly to Appletown, from where we had started the day before. Hearing bells in the town, I laid my pack down in the swamp, determined to ascertain if possible, who was there; not knowing but it might be our army; so I crawled along until near enough to hear voices. I rose up to look and to my great surprise saw an In-

dian but a few rods off who addressed me in the Seneca language, saying, "Come here." It was so unexpected I almost cringed, and for a a moment stood mute; then answered in Indian, "And to no"—that I must go and get some corn, and moved away from him, but he followed and insisted that I should come to him. I considered the matter, then turned and asked him who was in the town. He told me some that could talk English. I asked him whether they were Yankees, and he said "No," when briskly and cheerfully as I could, followed him, and we both went into the town, where I was surrounded by about one hundred of them. I shook hands with several and asked if they were going to Niagara. I said we are all going there. They said, "You have run away." I said, "How can that be," pointing and telling "there is my granny's house." They said, "What made you walk bushes then, and where is your grandmother?" I said, "She has gone to Niagara, and has left a great deal of corn. The field is in that direction, and I am going to get some and carry it along to eat by the way." I further said, "If you will stay here till I come back, I will bring you some."

They let me go and told me to bring the corn, so they would know whether I was honest. So I went off alone, and when I got out of their sight, ran as fast as I could, nearly a mile towards the army, and hid myself in a thicket of bushes, where I laid until near sunset. Then I crept up toward the road and concealed myself, to see if anyone passed by. I waited some time; finally went into the path. Just as I stepped into it a dog came trotting along. Now I thought I was surely gone, but soon got into the woods and hid until dark. I then went to look for my pack, but being dark could not find it. When I came near the town I heard people talking and laughing. I supposed they had got the pack, so went away to the cornfield, where I lay all night. It was somewhat cool, being the third day of September, and it rained a little. However, I slept well, considering the situation. I got up in the morning at a loss to know what was safe to do, but resolved to go to an outhouse, which I knew of, about a mile from Appletown, and stay there until the army came up. I had no fireworks with me, and strove hard to make a fire by rubbing sticks together, but all to no

purpose. I had eaten raw corn, having nothing else but three small pieces of dried horse beef and wild mandrakes since I ran away from the Indian forces, which was Thursday night, and it was now Saturday about noon.

Pinched with hunger, I resolved to go into the town, thinking peradventure the Indians' fire was not yet out. I found the town deserted. They had left two or three images with blankets on, which at a distance looked like Indians, and first I was startled. I could not find any fire, but found an old iron pot with a small hole in the bottom, which I stopped with a leaden bullet; then went to see if I could find my pack, which luckily I succeeded in doing. I took it and the pot and returned to the outhouse again. I thought myself rich, for I could both roast and boil, so cooked enough to last over the Sabbath. Here I lay this night and slept well. Fearing that Indians, while spying the motions of our army might come around, I had pulled away two palisades from opposite the door in order that I might more easily escape in case they should. In the morning, it being Lord's Day, I sat wondering if the army would be up this day,

and was contriving how I could introduce myself unhurt. In the afternoon I began to look for them.

CHAPTER XI.

How He Was Discovered by a Continental Sergeant and Two Privates of General Sullivan's Army.

As I sat reading, I saw, all of a sudden, through the cracks, three men, but whether black or white, I could not tell. Two of them went to a hole which I had prepared to get out at if invaded, and one went to the door.

Seeing that I was surrounded, and hoping they belonged to General Sullivan's army, I went quickly to the door, and to my great surprise saw that they were not in uniform, as I expected, but were entirely in Indian dress. I thought they were Tories, but as I afterwards learned, the one at the door was a sergeant of the riflemen, and the other two were privates. The Sergeant said, "Here is a prisoner." The other two came in at the hole and took all my things. The Sergeant took fast hold of me and asked, "What are you here for?" I told him it was my home—this was my grandmother's house, framing my answer under the belief that these men were

Tories. He said, "Will you go with me?". I answered "yes." He first took a silver brooch out of my shirt, then said: "You have plundered these things," and struck me with his rifle rod. I said, "No, the squaws made the shirt for me." He bade me pull it off, which I immediately did. He demanded all the rest of my clothes, thus stripping me entirely, except a pair of old Indian stockings. He said, as near as I can remember, using a horrid oath, "You stay here to kill white men do you?" I told him, "Not by any means. He took up a club and struck me, bidding me to go along. I said, "I have two petitions to make," which were that he would neither kill me or give me to the Indians, and further protested that I was naked and ashamed to go. He said, "I will spare your life with a devil to it," and struck me again. I said, "You are a Christian bred man, and I think it a shame to drive me naked." He struck me again and again, and said very roughly and with great fury: "Go along, quick time." I insisted on having something to put on and cover my nakedness. At last he gave me a piece of sacking bag, which I tied on. One of the other men gave me an

old shirt that was in my pack, and after awhile my coat. While putting it on they kept hurrying me along, and I asked if the Rebel army was near. He said with an oath: "Do you call us Rebels?" I answered, "I mean the army that is coming?" He gave me several blows and drove me into the town running and furiously striking me all the way. When we came onto the green, about twenty of the same company, with knives and tomahawks, came running towards us cursing and saying: "Why don't you kill the Tory?" and swore I should not live to go another step. However, they did not let them strike me, but drove me as fast as I could run until I was met by some acquaintances, who, to my exceeding great joy, at once released me.

[Doctor Peck in his history of Wyoming tells how George P. Ransom, who was in General Sullivan's army at the time, related the circumstances connected with Luke Swetland meeting the army. Ransom, happening to be near him, sang out: "Is that you Swetland?" "Good God!" exclaimed Swetland. "Is there any one here that knows me?" The course of treatment was now changed from abuse to

hearty congratulations. The supposed Tory was taken into the arms of his Yankee brothers, and with them returned to his beloved Wyoming.]

Throughout these scenes I had thought they were mine and the country's common enemies, but finding they were friends, everything was suddenly and agreeably changed, and being weak, feeble and fatigued by overexertion, I was so overcome that I could scarcely speak to them at first. I soon recovered, however, and went to the sergeant to thank him for sparing my life. He said, with an oath, "None of your jaw." He would not hear and went away from me. I never saw him again, as it was but a few days after that he was killed by the Indians.

But to return. While I was talking to my old acquaintances, General Poor sent for me to come into his marquee. He treated me well and gave me beef, pork and good wheat bread; such victuals as I had not eaten for more than twelve months. I ate but little, fearing it might hurt me. The General asked me to show the men all the corn fields, which I did. General Sullivan then sent for and ex-

amined me, asking who I was, where from, and how I came there. I told him how, when, and where I had lived, my captivity and escape. Several commissioned officers examined me also, and there were many gentlemen who could testify to my faithfulness; yet I was ordered under provost and so treated as a prisoner. I went to assist as a guide where I was acquainted and continued with the army to the end of its destination; then returned with it to Wyoming, from whence I was first taken.

CHAPTER XII.

His Arrival at Wyoming.

On my arrival at Wyoming many old acquaintances came to congratulate me on my return and gave me a number of presents. I stayed with them several days. Among my presents was a horse to enable me to go and find my family. I set out, and on or about the 25th day of October, 1779, found them, to my great joy, at Kent, in Connecticut, where we had lived before we went to Susquehanna—not having seen them in the space of about fourteen months. My old neighbors and acquaintances rejoiced with me and gave many tokens of regard.

When I thought of running away from the Indians, as I made several trials, I was solicitous to know my duty, that I might not, through self love, throw away my life foolishly. On the whole, I concluded it was right if it could be done with safety, and when I had fully escaped the guards, fell on my knees to return thanks and ask for future preservation.

When the riflemen finally came, and

treated me so barbarously, I had little hope of life left; notwithstanding the many narrow escapes. I expected my last moment had come. I had never before asked any creature to spare my life, but while in their hands, I had little time for contemplation. When I came to the army and was recognized, it was a matter of great joy, and I had a thankful heart. My mind seemed all confused, and I longed to be alone, out of the noise and bustle of the army, and found my confinement with it a great trial.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gives An Account of the Customs and Habits of the Indians.

Now to give a brief account of the customs prevalent among the Indians. Those with whom I lived did not appear to have any principles of religion at all, though they seemed to have some idea of an invisible Being, but their conception of what that being was, I could not ascertain. They would often come together, and one of them would speak to the audience for several minutes. One time, after hearing a long speech, they hung a dog on a high pole and burned another at the foot of it. One of them told me the purpose of it was that they might have good luck against the Yankees. They had many frolics, singing and dancing, wonderfully different from white people. I cannot describe it without making my narrative too lengthy. They seem to have some legislative order, but I cannot fully tell what was their methods. I saw a jail in one of their towns. They are good humored. The squaws do the cooking and patiently do all the

work in the field, while the Indians play and hunt. They also do the courting. They live, in many respects, as one family, living on corn, beans, squashes and potatoes as long as they last; also have some meat, sugar, milk and butter, but in the summer, chiefly on ground nuts, some other roots and weeds till green corn and beans come again, then they will have feast days. When they caught deer they ate the entrails and blood, and as incredible as you will think it is, they never emptied the contents out of the small intestines, but boiled all together and eat the whole of it. If a hog died with cold or hunger, as was often the case, they burnt the hair off and cooked intestines and all, simply squeezing out the contents before throwing into the kettle. As repulsive as it may seem, it tasted sweet and agreeable. They had many days for feasting. Each family would do their cooking at home, then carry the food to one house and divide, giving to each one a mess. Sometimes there would be nearly ten sorts eat at one time.

The country is very level and remarkably rich; alike, free from stone, well watered, well wooded with good mill streams; a vast

quantity of lands, many miles in length and breadth, without timber. There was, in some parts, an abundance of mulberry, peach and plum trees, and before General Sullivan's army cut them down, a great many large apple trees. It abounded with beach, hazel and black walnut; a sort of root that they called ookte-haw, and with which they made bread, and a great plenty of mandrakes. There are many lakes abounding with fish and a number of salt springs.

I lived in Appletown twelve months and two days, except a few intervals, and when I went to visit my adopted Indian relatives and some prisoners. The Indians were remarkably kind to me and made me a good many presents. I had, from one and another, three hats, five blankets, near twenty pipes, six razors, six knives, several spoons, a gun and ammunition, fire works, several Indian packets, one Indian razor, awls, needles, goose quills, paper, and many other things of small value. In many other ways they showed me great respect.

CHAPTER XIV.

His Recapitulation.

August 25, 1778. Oh, memorable day! When six savages, naked and dismally painted with red and black, rose up within reach of me. My first thought was to run, but thinking if I did, they would certainly kill me, and if I stood, they could no more than do so. Death then appeared near. With ejaculation I earnestly desired that I might have wisdom to direct me in this moment of trial, and that God would grant me all the needed graces of his Spirit and deliverance from the fear of men; and particularly from these Indians, who could only kill the body. And although they acted as though they would kill me every moment, yet I think I used good judgment and did as well and what was best for my own safety, as was possible. I felt that I was in the hands of the same Being who made us all, and He could dispose them to show me favor, so daily and almost hourly I sent up prayers to Almighty God that I might constantly feel my dependence and put my trust in Him.

CHAPTER XV.

Comments on His Story and Life.

Such is the story, and such the experience of one of Wyoming's settlers one hundred and thirty-five years ago. There is no more of pathos—perhaps not as much, to excite the sympathetic tear than in the happenings to many of his neighbors and friends, whose sufferings were augmented by the remorseless tomahawk and scalping knife. His life was spared. Why he could never divine, unless it was his abject submission to the fate that seemed in store for him and a certain degree of stoicism and bravery while under their cruel treatment, that brought admiration from their savage natures. Once it will be recalled, he writes about being compelled to run between two files of Indians, each with stick in hand to strike the victim, and which they called running the gauntlet. He used to tell that this pastime was of quite common occurrence among them, and that he would go through without a whimper when they would pat him on the back, saying: "Brave man, brave man." He too,

was a man of no ordinary intelligence, and could adapt himself to the circumstances by which he was surrounded, with wonderful alacrity. That he did so, and that he became popular among them, is clearly gleaned from the tale which is told. Notwithstanding the kindness they at a later day extended towards him, they still desired to retain him as a prisoner, when they were being driven by Sullivan's army to Niagara, and only by the most adroit manouvering did he escape their watchfulness; and even after having escaped from their main army, he was caught by the rear guard and released on the promise that he would bring corn to them from a field, with which he was familiar. In fact, among his greatest sufferings were those endured after eluding the Indians and in attempting to reach the American army. The story that he tells of the treatment he received at the hands of an American officer, is not only heart rending, but a disgrace to the cause which he claimed to represent. In comparison with the conduct of the Indians during the early days of his captivity, he was not one whit behind them for cruelty, and indecency, if indeed he did not take

the palm. It shows very markedly how bitter was the feeling existing between the American patriots and the Tories. But even though he may have supposed him to be a Tory, he was a prisoner and was entitled to that decent consideration generally extended to prisoners of war in all civilized countries. Though he had passed through many dangerous adventures with enemies, it was strange that now when relief seemed close at hand, he should be set upon in such a savage manner by those whom he had a right to believe would be his rescuers, and had it not been for the fortunate circumstance of his recognition by one of the party, there is no telling what may have happened to him.

Finally, he was back in Wyoming, there to find his family gone, and another long and tedious journey to go and find them. Think of the trials and tribulations of this good man then in the meridian of life. First a soldier, fighting in the battles of the revolution; then a captive by hostile Indians, and a year of privations and sorrows that few could have endured; then a rescue, fraught with humiliations and painful physical sufferings of a most dis-

graceful character; then a journey through an almost pathless wilderness in search of those most dear to him, and we get a faint idea of his wonderful endurance. Returning to Connecticut, it was not long before his mind began to wander back to Pennsylvania. When this man of iron nerve, forgetting his trials, privations and sufferings, packed his belongings, and in due time found himself settled upon the banks of the Susquehanna, some twenty miles beyond where he had originally made his home. But this brought no satisfaction. He had seen and known the beautiful Vale of Wyoming—its broad acres and its sunny skies, and there must be his final home. The year 1800 had come. The Indian had long since gone on his western tramp. Peace had come to the Pennamite and Connecticut settler, and the blessed Government of the United States of America established. Luke Swetland, and Belding, his son, re-established themselves right in the midst of the territory where once had been the scenes of British cruelty and Indian atrocities. Part of the old homestead still stands there, within sight of the battle field, and little less than two miles of Forty Fort. In

the rear part are the old oaken beams and the big fire place, long side of which the old man so often sat and smoked his pipe in peace and quietude, there to tell the story of his troubled life to loving grand children and friendly visitors. From this old home he buried his wife, and later his son and daughter-in-law. In many instances it might be said he was left alone. Not so with him; William Swetland, his oldest grandson, was spared to care for his younger brothers and sisters, and this aged grandfather. Physically strong, and with a heart beaming with love and affection, right nobly did he perform all the functions incident to the place he assumed, but wove himself into the affections of the aged grandfather and the dependent orphans, that lasted through life. Time came and Luke Swetland, on June 30th, 1823, about ninety-four years of age, was borne to his final home and laid by the side of his faithful wife, a short distance east of the old Forty Fort Church. His loyalty to home, friends and country, and to his God, left no doubt that the portals of Heaven were wide open, surrounded by a halo of light to guide him to the place he so well deserved.

CHAPTER XVI.

From Charles Miner's History of Wyoming.

It is hoped that it will not be out of place to close with an abstract from the venerable historian, Charles Miner's History of Wyoming, where, under the head of biographical sketches, prefacing by a reference to the country seat of the late William Swetland, four miles north of Kingston (this is the old Swetland homestead), he goes on to say:

"Luke Swetland, the grandfather, bore arms in defense of Wyoming, though it is not certainly known whether he was in the battle. Immediately after the expulsion, he, with twenty-five or thirty others of the settlers, united together and joined (not enlisted), the company of Captain Spalding. The fact is shown by the receipt they gave to Colonel Butler for Continental arms issued to them at Port Penn. Their aid thus strengthening Spalding's Company, enabled him earlier to march to Wilkes-Barre and arrest the depredations of the Indians. Mr. Swetland was taken prisoner with Joseph Blanchard near Nanticoke, where they had gone to mill.

(This was August 25, 1778, and were carried by the savages to their country near Geneva lake.) Besides the constant dread of torture, his sufferings from cold and want of food during the winter were intense. A man of ardent piety, the confidence and hope imparted by religion sustained him. To retrace his weary days of captivity would be but a repetition of ever-recurring sorrows. After having failed in several attemps to escape, he was at length rescued by our army under General Sullivan. Returning to his native Connecticut, he had a narrative of his captivity and sufferings printed at Hartford, which is in possession of the writer. In later days, I knew, and knowing could not but esteem the good old man. His taste and pride took a right direction, and were of much value to the settlement. I refer to his establishment of a nursery for fruit trees and his introduction from New England selected with care. It is long since he was withdrawn from life. The contrast between the sufferings of the grand sire and the prosperity of his descendants, leads to agreeable reflections. I cannot close this very brief notice without a passing tribute to the memory of Joseph Swetland, and Belding Swetland,

sons of the old gentleman, who, in early life, were the attached and respected friends of the writer. Though in a position remarkable for general health, they were both taken away in the mid-day of activity and usefulness. Peace to those who have departed, prosperity and honor to the living."

ADDENDA

ADDENDA

Wyoming Valley was first inhabited by a race that was entirely unknown to the Indians who were there at the time of its discovery by whites. In the earlier days there were unmistakable evidences of this fact.

Indians were found there in the early part of 1600, and remained there, more or less, until 1779, when they were driven from the Susquehanna and the Western part of the State of New York by General Sullivan's army.

The contest between Pennsylvania and Connecticut arose from the fact that each State claimed that the charters which were granted by King Charles to each of the States embraced the same territory. The language of the Connecticut charter being a grant of land of the width of the State, running Westward to the sea. This, of course, took in the Wyoming Valley; thus Connecticut assumed jurisdiction and citizens thereof, under authority of the State, began emigration thereto as early as 1762. The Pennsylvanians disputed the jurisdiction of Connecticut, hence arose a long and

bitter controversy known as the Pennamite war. So serious did it become that Congress finally intervened and appointed a Commission of Inquiry. It met at Trenton, New Jersey, and in 1782, after a long investigation, decided that the territory belonged to Pennsylvania. Even after that, the controversy was kept up until the Legislature of Pennsylvania passed an act conceding to the Connecticut settlers property rights in the lands on which they had settled.

Captain Robert Durkee, under whom Luke Swetland enlisted in the army in 1776, returned to Wyoming in 1778. He was looked upon as an able officer and was captain of one of the companies under Col. Zebulon Butler at the Battle of Wyoming, where he was killed.

Col. Zebulon Butler, who was a distinguished officer in the Revolutionary War, commanded the troops at the battle of Wyoming. He was the ancestor of the Butler family in Wilkes-Barre, and great grandfather of the wife of Judge Stanley Woodward.

General John I. Sullivan, who had command of the expedition to drive out the

British, Indians and Tories, from the Susquehanna and Western New York, was a native of Maine. He was a member of the first American Congress in 1774. He was appointed Brigadier General in 1775. He commanded the right wing at the Battle of Brandywine, and was commander at several other important battles; and finally was made a Major General. His expedition to exterminate the Indians in 1779 was entirely successful, and it was in his army that Luke Swetland became an important scout, and finally returned to Wyoming.

Luke Swetland was the tenth child of John and Sarah (Davis) Swetland, born in Lebanon, Connecticut, June 16, 1729; was married to Hannah Tiffany, April 1st, 1762, at Warren Township, Litchfield County, Connecticut. He had four sons who came to manhood: Belding, Daniel, Joseph and Artemas. Of Belding, more hereafter; of Daniel, we have no reliable account. Joseph married Saloma Hall for his first wife, and Clara Seward for his second, and by them had a large family. Gordon Swetland was a son by the first wife. He lived in Wyoming County and

had a son William H., who was a prosperous merchant at Mehoopany. Artemas, the fourth son, married Lydia Abbott and moved to Ohio.

Belding Swetland, the first son of Luke, was married to Sally Gay, a sister of Fisher Gay, who contributed the land on which stands the Wyoming monument. They were married in Sharon, Connecticut, in 1787. He died at the old farm house in Wyoming, July 22, 1816, and his wife, January 18, 1809. Their children were: William, Eli, Ebenezer, Eleazer, Betsy, Uriah, Hiram, Almira (wife of William Merrifield), Peggy, Harriet, Sally, and Wayne.

William Swetland, the first son of Belding, was born in Connecticut, June 26, 1789, and came with his father and grandfather, Luke, on their return to the Wyoming Valley. He married Catharine Saylor, daughter of Dr. Peter Saylor, of Northampton County, Pennsylvania, September 28, 1819. He carried on a mercantile business near the old homestead, besides managing the farm, and on the death of his father became the mainstay

of the family. He was a man of great generosity and universally esteemed. He was at one time a Commissioner of Luzerne County, and was elected to the Constitutional Convention of 1838, to revise the Constitution of Pennsylvania. He had no predilection for political life, hence, devoted his time to his business affairs, which were very extensive. He became President of the Lackawanna and Bloomsburg Railroad Company; also President of the Pittston Bank, and was otherwise connected with other corporations, besides attending to his large private business. At an early date he became devotedly interested in religious affairs. He was a large contributor to Wyoming Seminary and built at his own expense Swetland Hall, a large building connected therewith. He devoted much time and money to the rehabilitation of the old Forty Fort Church and Cemetery; in fact was a willing contributor to every benevolent enterprise that appealed to him. Such was William Swetland, the grandson of Luke Swetland, whose sufferings and privations have been told in these pages. He had three children: Caroline M., George and Margaret. The latter two

came to mature years, but died comparatively young. Caroline married Payne Pettebone, October 3, 1837. He at once became the trusted help and adviser of his father-in-law, and took a position of great prominence in the church and in business circles. His wife, Caroline M., will long be remembered for her goodness, her generosity, and exemplary life. Payne Pettebone died March 20th, 1888, and his wife, July 7th, 1900, leaving two children, Robert T. (deceased), and Kate Pettebone Dickson. William Swetland died September 27th, 1864, at the old Wyoming homestead, greatly loved and respected by the community in which he lived. It is a matter of congratulation to hold him and his kindred in memory and to pay this mark of love and respect.

[THE END.]